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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Activities of a Local Church

In the following summaries of the multiplied activities of the Walmer Road Baptist Church, Toronto, Canada, it is not assumed that there is anything unique. It is but a plain statement of how one church has sought to adapt itself to the many-sidedness of our complex modern life. This church, which is but twenty-six years old, has had a very rapid growth under a succession of very able leaders and preachers. For twenty years its work was confined to the ordinary channels of church activity. Six years ago, however, one of the downtown Baptist churches had come to the point of closing its doors. The influx of foreigners had been such as entirely to change the character of the neighborhood. Members had moved to other districts, and the financial burden had become impossible for the remaining members to sustain.

At this crisis Walmer Road Church stepped in and assumed the responsibility for the work. Under a committee appointed to oversee the work a new policy was settled on, and the old church was changed into a social center or institute. A director of social service was appointed, under whose wise direction the work has grown until it is almost too large for the parent church to carry on. A week's program taken from one of our recent calendars is of interest as showing the activities going on within the institute itself:

SUNDAY

- 9:45 A.M.—Scouts' Bible Class. Church Parade.
- 11:00 A.M.—Public Worship.
- 3:00 P.M.—Sunday School. Adult Men's and Women's Classes.
- 6:45 P.M.—Children's Service.
- 7:00 P.M.—Public Worship.
- 8:00 P.M.—Social Hour.

MONDAY

- 3:00 P.M.—Sunbeams' Club.
- 4:00 P.M.—Children's Clinic, Homeopathic.
- 7:30 P.M.—B. P. Boy Scouts, Troop 55.
- 8:00 P.M.—English for Coming Canadians.
- 8:00 P.M.—Dressmaking.

TUESDAY

- 2:30 P.M.—Baby Clinic. Afternoon Tea.
- 4:00 P.M.—Piano Class.
- 4:30 P.M.—Junior Chorus Class.
- 7:00 P.M.—Violin Class.
- 8:00 P.M.—B. Y. P. U.

WEDNESDAY

- 3:30 P.M.—Jolly Chums Club.
- 7:30 P.M.—Stenographers' Class. Typewriting.
- 7:30 P.M.—Cooking Class.
- 8:00 P.M.—Men's Club.

THURSDAY

- 2:30 P.M.—Mothers' Meetings. Sewing Circles.
- 3:30 P.M.—General Clinic.
- 7:30 P.M.—Junior Athletic Club.
- 8:00 P.M.—Prayer Meeting.
- 8:00 P.M.—English for Coming Canadians.

FRIDAY

- 2:30 P.M.—Mothercraft Class. City Health Dept. Tea.
- 8:00 P.M.—Scouts' Lecture at Royal Canadian Institute.
- 8:00 P.M.—Millinery Class.
- 8:00 P.M.—Choir Practice.

SATURDAY

- 3:00 P.M.—Piano Class.
- 3:00 P.M.—Story Hour (for children seven to twelve years old).
- 8:30 P.M.—Orchestra Practice.
- 9:30 to 12 A.M.—Play School.

DAILY EXCEPT SUNDAY

Women's Employment Bureau, 9:30-10:30 A.M.
Milk Station, 5:00-5:30 P.M.

Memorial Institute Shops for the Unemployed are turning out toys, cocoa mats, jardinier stands, stools, small bookcases, oak candlesticks, oak or mahogany curate stands, hand-wrought copper candlesticks, hand-knitted socks and mittens, and a large variety of women's and children's clothing. Samples can be seen any week day at the Institute, and orders are warmly appreciated.

In addition to the foregoing the institute erected a small factory in 1913 to tide a

number of men over periods of unemployment. In this way a great many families were held together until the breadwinner could find settled employment. This shop for the unemployed turned out all kinds of toys. The director marketed the goods, retaining enough to renew the stock, the rest of the income going in wages to the man or woman employed. In the summer a "fresh-air farm" is leased to which about four hundred needy children and mothers are taken for a two-weeks' vacation.

In a mere summary such as this, one has necessarily to leave out what after all is of greatest interest, the stories of human interest. Stories of deepest pathos, and red tragedy, of gloom and despair, of men and women who walk on the edge of an abyss, and who would fain solve or end it all by stepping quietly over. Here and there incidents crop up that are grotesque and funny, that make you smile through your tears, a strange blending of altruism and selfishness, a sort of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde life, but the inspiration of the task lies in the fact that most of the cases were Mr. Hyde's, untouched by the elements of Dr. Jekyll until the institute touched them, and the hope is that the Hyde personality shall finally be eliminated.

Besides the director there are two other paid assistants, a social settlement worker and a visiting nurse, and a host of volunteer workers from all over the city.

Contributions for this work come from many places, from the prairies of the West to the cities of the sea. The young people of one country church canvassed their whole township a year ago last autumn and sent down eight tons of farm produce.

Much more might be said, but space forbids. Suffice it to say, that what six years ago seemed to be a dead cause has become a hive of bustling human activity scattering human sunshine and cheer in

many dark corners where it was so much needed.

In the midst of all this social activity the Walmer Road Church, not yet satisfied, was turning its mind in other directions. The demand for a more modern educational system was pressing itself upon the church, and in the spring of 1914 a new \$75,000 Sunday-school building and educational plant was opened, with facilities for recreation and education, perhaps the most completely equipped in the Dominion. To take charge of the work a director of religious education was called, under whose care the work has been consolidated and systematized. The school is completely graded, both in classes and lessons, and a staff of eighty officers and teachers carries the work along efficiently and well.

During the past year the work has suffered greatly, owing to the fact that almost one hundred and twenty-five young men of the church are today on the battle-fields of France and Flanders, some in the Balkans, some in England, some in the camps of Canada.

Under the able preaching and inspiration of Rev. John MacNeill the church ministers to a large congregation every Sunday. Last week the church at considerable financial loss to itself granted leave of absence to Mr. MacNeill, who, at the call of the National Council of the Young Men's Christian Association, will spend the next four months preaching to great groups of soldiers in the base camps in England and France.

The church feels proud to make the sacrifice, as its pastor is the first man in all Canada to be asked to do this particular kind of work.

Thus Walmer Road Church, by the very necessity of modern conditions and circumstances, has been led into a very wide ministry indeed, seeking to meet the inspirational, educational, and social need of a modern city's life.